

WASHINGTON – In response to security concerns at O'Hare and airports throughout the nation, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL) and Dan Lipinski (D-IL) introduced legislation today that targets contractors who fail to account for identification badges of former employees. The Airport Badge Security Act (H.R. 2288) would fine contractors that do not collect or make reasonable efforts to collect security badges from former employees. Contractors that do not notify the airport's operator within 24 hours of a terminated employee will also be eligible for the fine.

"Since 2004, more than 3,600 security badges have gone missing at O'Hare," said Congressman Kirk. "These badges are the only identification necessary for independent contractors to enter the airport's most secure areas, including the airfield. This casual attitude toward reclaiming security badges is not acceptable. We must know with certainty who has unrestricted access to the airport, terminals, baggage, and aircraft, and if they remain trustworthy and authorized to work in a secure area."

"The fine will help serve as a deterrent," explained Congressman Lipinski. "It will send a message to contractors that the status quo just isn't good enough. When thousands of security badges have been reported missing, we need to do all we can to make sure that these contractors are doing their jobs. If they aren't, they should be held accountable."

According to data compiled by the Congressional Research Service, many of the nation's airports have similar problems reclaiming security badges. In early February, officials at the Los Angeles International Airport reported more than 120 missing Transportation Security Administration uniforms and badges. In Oakland, 500 badges went missing last year. At Buffalo Airport in New York, nearly 40 security badges were reported missing or stolen in 2006. Forty-two turned up missing in Dallas.

"In the post-September 11 environment, we must ensure professional vigilance to secure our nation's airports," said Congressman Kirk. "We need private contractors to be held accountable for what should be a routine business practice. By hitting contractors where it hurts – their pocketbooks – we can help make our nation's airports safer."

The full text of the legislation is below.

A BILL

To amend title 49, United States Code, to establish a civil penalty for failure of certain

employers to collect or make reasonable efforts to collect an airport security badge from an employee on the date of termination of employment, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Airport Badge Security Act”.

SEC. 2. FAILURE TO COLLECT AIRPORT SECURITY BADGES.

Section 46301(a) of title 49, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following:

“(6) FAILURE TO COLLECT AIRPORT SECURITY BADGES.—Notwithstanding paragraph (1), any employer (other than a governmental entity or airport operator) who employs an employee to whom an airport security badge or other identifier used to obtain access to a secure area of an airport is issued before, on, or after the date of enactment of this paragraph and who does not collect or make reasonable efforts to collect such badge from the employee on the date that the employment of the employee is terminated and does not notify the operator of the airport of such termination within 24 hours of the date of such termination shall be liable to the Government for a civil penalty not to exceed \$10,000.”